

Halo: United

by AwesomeZombieSlayerGRL

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Summary: Alliances are found in strange people, new friends are made, & an old enemy has found new strength right in the middle of the Human-Covenant war. Hope is rekindled. The Sangheili finally discover that the Prophets have mislead them with the so-called Great Journey and realize the threat of the Flood and what destruction the Halo Rings can cause. Who will win? Who will lose?

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Section One

Flashback

Chapter 1

0930 Hours, November 17, 2552 (Standard Military Calendar) Location:  
Quarantine ring around High Charity/ Covenant Capital Ship  
\_Translucence\_

"What's the status on the quarantine?" asked Ship mistress 'Cendumee. One of the navigators glanced up at her briefly before returning his attention to the monitor in front of him. "About fifty eight percent complete, Ship Mistress," replied the navigator.

'Cendumee nodded to herself as she walked back and forth across the bridge. She suddenly stopped. She didn't want to let her crew know that she was anxious; she had to exude confidence and command.

'Cendumee had only recently acquired the position of Ship Mistress. She didn't want her crew to think her incapable of commanding a ship.

She had gotten the \_Translucence\_ about a year ago. It was a fine ship with plenty of firepower. Ten plasma turrets lined the outside; the main gun was placed on the belly of the ship and could deal a

tremendous amount of damage. Shields and armor were at the max.

It could take a good deal of damage before the shields gave way and the armor started taking hits.

The ship had a crew of about five hundred Elites. The Ship Mistress was lucky to have gotten her hands on a few Engineers as well who were below deck standing by in case something broke or went critical. 'Cendumee turned back to the main screen behind her. Several Sangheilian ships circled the great mass that was \_High Charity\_.

\_Gods, the parasite works fast\_, 'Cendumee thought and shuddered. She was aboard \_High Charity\_ when the Flood entered the capital city. 'Cendumee and a few others had disengaged from a fight with a couple of Brutes and were making their way to the docking bay when the great city shuddered. The Elites froze when they heard a deep keening wail coming from behind them. One of the sliding doors had burst open and out came several combat forms rushing at their stunned prey.

The Elites drew their energy swords and took off, turning around occasionally to slow the enemy down. As soon as they reached the docking bay, 'Cendumee rushed to the door terminal nearby and tried opening the door. They were locked out. Adrenaline coursed through her veins as 'Cendumee worked as fast as she could to hack in.

A minute passed and the parasite was getting closer. At long last, the door slid open. A Major and Zealot stayed behind to buy 'Cendumee and her group some time. The others hurried aboard the \_Translucence\_ while 'Cendumee stopped just a few feet from the gravity lift. The Zealot turned to see his Ship Mistress running up to the Major and him.

"What do you think you are doing?" he demanded.

"I didn't plan to leave my men behind," she replied and drew out her plasma rifle in one hand, energy sword in the other.

"You need to leave now, ma'am!" the Major shouted over his shoulder just as a combat form hurled itself at him. 'Cendumee watched as the Major fell down and ran up quickly, cutting the infected body in half. But it was in vain: the Major was infected; a long gash cut across from his shoulder midway down his chest. Already, green spores were issuing from his body.

"Go now!" he shouted at the two, "I'll hold them off."

The Zealot nodded at his fallen brethren and ran towards the lift. The Major and 'Cendumee looked at each other. "It's been an honor working with you, ma'am," he said before standing up and firing at the other combat forms. 'Cendumee quickly hurried to the lift. A sense of vertigo passed over her before she entered the bridge.

A few Sangheili had already manned their stations and were awaiting orders. 'Cendumee strode over to the bridge. She turned to one to one of the navigators and ordered, "Get us the hell out of here."

The ship shuddered and began turn slowly out of the docking bay towards the exit. "I want engines at one hundred and ten percent now!" ordered 'Cendumee. "Aye," replied one of the navigators and the

ship sped towards the vacuum of space.

About an hour passed after the Ship Mistress's escape from the infected city. She immediately issued an order to decompress nonessential sectors in the ship to minimize chances of the Flood infecting her ship. She put her crew through their paces, having them run a systems check on the ship and crew. Another hour passed before the results came back in. The ship was clean.

'Cendumee breathed out a sigh of relief and turned back to the main screen. She watched as several Covenant ships engaged one another. Once the last of the Brutes were subdued or otherwise, fleet wide message came through. "Message from Shipmaster 'Vadumee," called out one of the Sangheili.

"Put him through," replied 'Cendumee. The pedestal near her glowed a soft blue and projected the Shipmaster. 'Vadumee looked intimidating in the dark glow of his ship. His white armor shimmered briefly in the dim light as he moved.

"Most of the Brutes have been subdued. Already the parasite grows on \_High Charity\_. To minimize the chances of its escape, I'm issuing a command for all ships in the vicinity to form a quarantine ring around \_High Charity\_. If a ship does break free from quarantine, pursue it before it is able to engage slip space systems. That is all." With that, the projection clicked off and every Ship Master nearby gave their crew its orders. Within minutes, a solid ring was formed around the infected city.

Nothing had managed to escape in the past few hours. 'Cendumee ordered scans of the city every half hour and have it projected on one of the smaller screens near her. She examined what scans her crew had given her at the moment. Despite the grisly outcome, she was amazed at how fast the parasite worked.

Then, a small speck in the bottom right hand corner caught her eye. She moved the picture of \_High Charity\_ to a larger view screen and narrowed her eyes at the small speck. "'Medanee," she addressed one of the crewmen, "Zoom in and enhance on the bottom right hand side of the \_Charity\_." 'Medanee quickly adjusted the view screens and zoomed in on the specified area.

He continued to zoom in until 'Cendumee told him to stop. The Ship Mistress leaned in and compared the area with the previous scans. The speck remained consistent within each one. Turning a dial on the bridge controls, she further increased the quality on the photo until she could make out the vague outline of a Covenant ship.

Her eyes widened and she looked at the main screen. Her fingers danced across the controls as she searched for the ship. "Bring up the main cameras on my screen," she ordered.

It didn't take her long to find the area she was looking for. It was still resting in the same area. 'Cendumee cursed under her breath. "What's wrong, Ship Mistress?" a voiced asked behind her. 'Cendumee glanced at the SpecOps Commander out of the corner of her eye.

"There's a destroyer hiding just behind \_High Charity\_," she replied. "Let me see," and the Commander brushed past 'Cendumee. She watched

him as he adjusted and readjusted the screen. "There's nothing here," he said.

'Cendumee was taken aback when he showed her the screen. The destroyer was gone. "Wha-?" she started but was instantly cut off as the \_Translucence\_ listed to the side. The destroyer had made a quick in-system jump and sent out a radar jamming signal to remain undetected for a few crucial seconds. 'Cendumee was thrown against the railing and as she stood up, she gripped it in one hand.

"Who was that?" she demanded. "The \_Brutal Claw\_," called one of the Elites. "Lock on them. Do not lose that ship," she ordered. A couple of the crewmen swiveled in their chairs to look at her. "Ship Mistress, we're under direct orders from the Shipmaster \_not\_ to break quarantine," one commented.

"He also said that if a ship escapes, we should pursue it by any means necessary to minimize the risk of the parasite spreading into other systems," countered 'Cendumee. The Minor stiffened slightly. "Are you suggesting that we follow the ship?" asked the SpecOps commander quietly.

"Yes," the Ship Mistress replied curtly. With that, the crew quickly set to work tracking the \_Brutal Claw\_. "The \_Claw\_'s engaging slipspace engines," reported an Elite. "Get us close to them," the Ship Mistress said quietly.

In the back of her mind she knew that this ship was likely not contaminated and was just a destroyer commandeered by a few Brutes who were lucky to have not been killed sooner.

\_Well, their luck will be running out shortly,\_ 'Cendumee thought with a smug smile. "Send the Shipmaster a message," she instructed a nearby Major, "Tell him that we're pursuing a possible host ship."

The Major nodded and walked over to a nearby terminal and relayed said message. "Message away," he said. "Ma'am!" a navigator called out, "The destroyer's preparing to jump. They know we're here but they're ignoring us."

"Are we in position?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good. Alert the rest of the crew of the jump. As soon as we enter normal space, find out what the hell this ship is doing and blast them to kingdom come."

"Aye aye. And ma'am? You may want to hold onto something. It's going to get a little bumpy."

With that, \_Brutal Claw\_ leapt forward, dragging the \_Translucence\_ along with it.

\_The odds are in our favor. These Brutes are going to regret not dying back aboard \_High Charity, thought the Ship Mistress as she remembered a time not so long ago when the tables had been tipped slightly in the other's favor.

A year and a half ago. 1830 Hours May 23, 2551 (Standard Military Calendar) Location: Gamma IV

Varu 'Ptolemee had intercepted a transmission from a nearby world during one of his patrols. Its contents contained the location of one of their recon teams that had gone dark a few months prior. The SpecOps Commander chose two others to join him in the rescue mission: Ven 'Norolamee, a golden armored Zealot and Verilian a 'Cendumee, a red armored Major.

Their superiors told them to proceed with caution once they landed; all previous attempts to rescue the captured Elites had failed.

The three were shipped off to Gamma IV, a recently taken human world. There were still a few survivors, but none that would pose a problem. There were even rumors of a captured "demon", the humans' biologically enhanced soldiers. It seemed highly unlikely, but the Commander instructed his squad to proceed carefully.

Once on the surface, Verilian scouted ahead. Even without her active camouflage, Varu was impressed at how quickly she was able to meld into the shadows. She came back a few minutes later. She had sent up a probe and was able to get a bird's eye view from it the camera screen attached to her wrist. It was too dark to see normally, so she had switched between thermal and night vision.

About five klicks North West from their position was a relatively small outpost. There were a lot of thermal heat signatures coming from it so Varu guessed that they had found their target. The trek would take about a few hours if they went at a good pace.

About two hours into their hike, a sudden storm overtook them. The Elites hurried to find shelter among the dense forest. There was a huge redwood tree that had been holed out in its middle, so they took up shelter there. 'Norolamee took the first watch while Varu and Verilian bunkered down. They didn't dare light a fire for fear of being spotted.

Verilian was about to relieve 'Norolamee for the second watch a few hours later, the two Elites froze when a branch snapped, the sound echoing in the darkness. About twenty feet in front of them stood a huge, hulking shape. The two didn't breathe as the figure began to walk away from their small camp. 'Norolamee woke the Commander and told him what had just occurred.

Ven's description of the figure matched that of a Brute Stalker. "This is worse than we thought," the Commander muttered quietly. They couldn't stay hidden in the tree any longer. The storm had lessened and began to move on to the south.

The forest was nearly flooded. The soil was extremely muddy. It came up to the Elites' ankles every time they stepped down. The going was tough but they were more than half way through to the outpost when the Commander motioned for his squad to stop. The Commander was on point, Verilian the middle man, and Ven brought up the rear. They froze and hunkered down a little in the dense foliage. Verilian edged out the hilt of her energy sword and gripped it tightly.

Ven shifted slightly behind her; she turned her head a fraction and watched him carefully bring out his plasma rifle. The Commander had

both his rifle and sword at the ready. They were all tense and waited quietly until a muffled rustle alerted the three Elites of a presence nearby.

They didn't immediately attack but waited for the pursuers to reveal themselves.

"You're a hard man to find, 'Ptolemee," boomed out a deep voice a few feet away from Varu. The SpecOps Commander stood and faced the giant Brute as if he were greeting an old friend.

"Ah, Magnus, I didn't expect to find you here," replied the Commander.

Verilian and Ven exchanged glances as they hesitantly stood behind their commander. Magnus was at least nine feet tall, with black thick hair, and typical armor plating that covered the chest, arms, legs, back, and any other areas that were vulnerable. The Brute smiled, revealing several sharp teeth.

"And what," asked Magnus, "exactly is it you are doing here, Varu? Last I heard, you were a little tied up. Caught in detention center only to escape with the aid of a \_human.\_" The Brute spat out the word as if it burned his tongue.

He then paused and examined one of his claws before returning his gaze to the Commander; a slight grin crawled across his face.

\_Humans?\_ thought Verilian, \_Has the Commander turned on us?\_ She quickly shook her head. No, the Commander would never involve himself in lowly human matters. He probably just killed the human as soon as it proved useless. Yet

The Commander stiffened ever so slightly but the Brute leader was having too much fun poking at the Elite that he paid little attention to his adversary's body language. "Funny," the Commander said, "Last I heard, your ship was taken away from you and your crew disbanded for insubordination and possible treachery." The Brute froze mid laugh and turned to glare at the Commander while a few of the Brute Stalkers milling around shifted side to side uneasily, processing this new information.

The side of the Commander's mouth turned up just so, giving the appearance of a hidden smile.

Tension seemed to crackle in the air while Varu crossed his arms across his broad chest as he watched the Brute fume silently in front of him. After a few tense minutes, the Brute calmly collected himself. "You still haven't answered my question, Commander," he sneered.

"And what, pray tell, was that again?"

"What are you doing here? You seem awfully heavily armed for a simple stroll for the woods."

Magnus seemed to tense up ever so subtly. The two Elites behind Varu readied their weapons. The Brute seemed to be itching for fight.

The Elites were outnumbered three to one. An acceptable fight.

"As do you," Varu countered, "It obviously doesn't look like a typical raid. What are you hiding, I wonder." He tapped one of his lower mandibles with a long finger in contemplation.

Suddenly, Magnus roared loudly and turned to smack Varu. The Elites burst into action.

Blue and orange fire crossed paths as the aliens dove for cover. Needles flew over 'Cendumee's head as she slammed her back into a nearby tree. She instinctively ducked and returned fire. The Commander and Ven were nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, a Brute Stalker rose up near her and leveled his Spiker with her head.

Just as quickly as he rose up, the Brute grimaced and fell down in a heap. The SpecOps Commander stood behind the carcass, brushing off his energy dagger that burned softly in the dark.

"Where's Ven?" 'Cendumee called out to him as the Commander ducked a wild swing that arced over his head. The Brute repeatedly swung at the Elite who continued to dance out of his opponent's way.

The Major raised her rifle and just as the Brute was about to swing at Varu again, a blue plasma bullet drilled through its head.

"I don't know," the Commander answered and the two began to gaze warily at the brush. Then, Ven's voice sounded nearby. He was wrestling with a Brute who tried to pin him down but got a sword through the gut as an answer. Just as it fell off the Zealot another one clubbed him in head. Ven staggered slightly but had little time to recover.

Verilian aimed her rifle at the Brute and quickly shot off a few rounds. Thankful for the short respite he was given, Ven gave her a quick nod. He then looked over her shoulder. The Major turned around and saw that the Commander wasn't there. Instead, a huge hulking shape stood in front of her.

\_Ah, hell\_.

Magnus stood in front of the Major and smiled mirthlessly. He hefted a gravity hammer that the Elite hadn't noticed before. Seeing that his quarry wasn't about to run away, he swung the hammer over his head-

And let out a painful yell. An energy sword was impaled in his shoulder. Gripping the hilt was the SpecOps Commander. His hand was on the Brute's shoulder and the other on his sword, bracing himself with his legs on the Brute's back.

"Major!" he yelled, "Grab Ven and get out of here! There are too many!"

He cut the Major off as she began to protest. "That's an order, Major," he said to her and wrapped his arm around the Brute's, trying to buy her and the Zealot a little time.

Verilian tore back through the forest, leaving behind her superior officer in search of Ven. She found him pushing back a couple of

Brutes who were taking opportunistic swings at him. Verilian joined the Zealot and they took down the Brutes in a matter of minutes.

"Where's the Commander?" Ven asked her once they were able.

"He's ordered us to fall back. There are too many."

The Zealot looked at her as if the word "fall back" was foreign to him. "There are never too many," Ven replied.

"The order came from him, not me, 'Norolamee. We need to leave now." Verilian stared hard at the unwieldy Zealot. He was far above her rank, but orders were orders. Without another word, Ven nodded stiffly and the two took off.

Brutes were closing in on the pair. A brief firefight forced them to separate. Ven was drawn back into the forest; the Major took another step and tumbled head over heels down a hill.

She came to a stop a few seconds later and reoriented herself. She looked up at the cliff she had just fallen down. It was at least a good hundred, or so, feet high. It didn't take her pursuers long to find her again. The Elite took off and ran as if the very devil were chasing her.

All around her branches snapped and bushes and limbs were crushed. It was thunderous. Her last thought was, \_Why are they chasing us? What are they getting at?\_, before she was hit in the head by a low-hanging branch.

The Major came to a few hours later. Before actually opening her eyes, she took a quick assessment of her situation. She was conscious of several others around her. Whether they were friendly or not remained to be determined. The ground beneath her was cold and hard; it felt like concrete. The Major then became aware of a pungent odor that she related to humans.

\_Fantastic\_, she thought grimly. Soft voices whispered back and forth around her. One was a female, quiet and curious, the other, male, sounded deep and thoughtful. Verilian dared to open her eyes.

Right away, conversation died down as soon as the Elite sat up and glanced around their prison. Huddled in one corner were six humans that visibly flinched when her gaze passed over them. Two other humans stood apart from the group; one instantly moved closer to them in a protective stance. This one was male and he wasn't the only one not happy with the accommodations.

The other was female. She was kneeling next to was another SpecOps Commander, one or two ranks below Varu, who was looking over one of his wounded brethren. She quickly recognized the two to be the missing recon team: Xira 'Ethavuree and Isna 'Tumonee.

\_Where's the third?\_ Verilian thought and looked around to see the SpecOps Commander in deep conversation with another Elite. Varu and the other Elite turned in the Major's direction when she began to move.

"Well, look who decided to wake up," came the female voice again.



Verilian's head swiveled around and faced the human. She was now standing in front of the Major with her arms crossed. Verilian eyed the human warily; the human was about two feet taller than the Major's shoulder, with the Elite was sitting.

Obviously the human was waiting for a response. Verilian didn't answer. Instead, she turned her attention towards her commanding officer. "Where are we?" she asked.

"The compound you spotted," came his reply.

Verilian nodded and stood. She glanced at the human again. She was maybe a little over five feet; it felt good to be taller than her. "Who are you?" she asked the human.

"Alexis Peterson," the human replied. The Elite nodded with her head with an unspoken question poised at the man and the other humans. "That's Hup-" at that, the Major gave the human a look, "and the others are a few captured civilians."

Verilian wanted to get far away from the humans as possible, but if the commander hasn't given the order to kill them, then she would wait. The Major glanced around at her surroundings: the room they were in wasn't necessarily cramped, it was about twenty feet wide and ten feet tall so the Elites were able to move around easily without the possibility of hitting their heads.

Another smell penetrated the complex and Verilian recoiled from it. Brutes. The door, the only door, opened on the opposite wall and something foul smelling crawled into the room. The door closed with a sharp scraping sound. The Elites and humans backed away and all nearly rushed towards the small barred window opposite the door. The human dubbed Alexis walked over to it, picked it up, and tossed the foul smelling thing out the window where it landed with a resounding splat!

"And there goes lunch," Hup muttered. He crossed his arms and leaned up against one of the walls. "How long have you been here?" asked the commander.

Hup looked up at the Elite once before answering. "A good month and a half," he replied, "Your pals were already here when we showed up."

Xira looked up at the other SpecOps commander. "They've been interrogating us. Isna took a fairly bad hit," Xira put in. "Any idea what they want?" The other shrugged.

Isna opened his eyes and coughed once. He cursed quietly when he looked around. "They found you, too?" he asked. Xira pulled his comrade to his feet; purple blood stained the ground where he had lain. "Including the mighty 'Norolamee?" Isna continued, with sarcasm coloring his voice. Ven gave his friend a look.

Verilian glanced over at the other Elite who was with her commander. She recognized him to be Kotan 'Takomamee, a very talented warrior and Zealot. He nodded once at her before returning his gaze to the window. They needed to escape and fast.

The human guessed the Major's thoughts. "We've already tried to

escape. Failed," she said. The Major looked at the door and studied it from a distance. She walked over to it and ran a hand over its rusted surface. It was still fairly strong but with enough stress it should bend. She hit it once with her fist; the noise rang out faintly. Kotan walked over to her as if he knew what she was thinking. "We have the patrols and shifts noted. If we plan to escape, it would have to be during one of the shifts," the warrior pointed out.

"When will the next shift take place?" she asked.

"Another hour."

One of the humans huddled up in the corner looked up at the big aliens. "We're getting out of here?" he asked quietly. The Sangheili nodded. Varu and Kotan studied the door as best they could. It was rusted and would bend and eventually break if enough force was applied to it. But they would have to be quick about it. No doubt it the rusted door would make plenty of noise.

None of the occupants wanted to end up back in the cell.

About forty five minutes later, there was a slight shuffle of feet outside the door. Grunts of acknowledgement from the door guards. The group of misfits froze at the sound of muted conversation. Kotan nodded once to Xira who walked carefully over to the door, mindful to not make any noise. The Sangheili positioned himself near the door to hear what was left of the Brutes' exchange before returning Kotan's nod. It was time.

The humans were briefed on what to do. Neither side was entirely willing to work with the other but they both wanted to get out their prison cell and save tearing each other's throats out for later. When Xira gestured quickly with his hand, the humans and Sangheili rushed quickly and quietly to the door. Pushing with everything they had, the door bent slightly and creaked.

The noise nearly froze them. "Keep pushing!" hissed Varu. Spurred on by the commander's voice, the combined force of the two races broke down the door. The sound was loud; that was putting it lightly. It clattered to the ground and all fourteen of them rushed out. Just as they were about to leave, the human named Hup stopped for a moment. "Wait, Alexis." He grabbed his comrade's arm and forced her to stop. The Sangheili paused and watched the humans.

Their muted exchange was making the Major nervous. She wanted to leave this complex behind now. She turned around to see her commander shake his head once before returning to the humans. The female glanced back at the Sangheili once before conferring with her teammate. "Well?" demanded 'Norolamee. "A friend of ours was kept on the opposite side of the complex," explained Alexis.

"A friend?" 'Norolamee repeated.

"Yes, a friend," Hup shot back. "We can't leave without him," Alexis continued, glaring at her teammate. "Quit the pissing contest," she hissed at Hup.

Without second thought, the two humans took off in the opposite direction. Needing no further instruction, Kotan jumped in after

them, followed closely by the others. The six other humans had no choice other than to follow.

They ran to the other side of the complex, all the while dodging patrols. Finally, they came to rest outside a similar door only this one was reinforced. Strongly. Varu eyed the door while Hup attempted to access the security panel. "What's behind this door?" the SpecOps commander asked warily.

"Our friend," Alexis replied simply. After a few more moments, the panel beeped once and unlocked the door. It came open slightly. Verilian snuck a look. It was similar to their cell but, like the door, was reinforced to hold something stronger.

\_What's stronger than a group of Sangheili?\_ she thought before it clicked in her mind. "A Spartan?!" she hissed. Hup met her gaze calmly. "Yeah," he replied, "He came here to bust us out but got caught. We're repaying the debt."

Verilian had heard of such persons. Spartans were supposedly equal in strength with the Sangheili. She had never encountered one before but knew that they were accurate, strong, and extremely lethal. Suddenly, there was a muffled thump inside the room and the clanking of metal on metal. The door was quickly opened and in front of Verilian stood a towering figure clad in iridescent green armor.

The Major nearly backpedaled into her superior. Kotan stepped in immediately, ready to fight the giant with 'Norolamee standing next to him. The figure moved swiftly, knocking 'Norolamee off his feet. It moved onto Kotan who took a defensive stance. The two moved in sync with each other. When one responded, the other followed.

Varu joined his brethren as Kotan was knocked to the side. The commander's shields flared as he deflected a punch. He let go of couple quick jabs at the Spartan's armor. It grunted in pain. No shields flared. "Guys, knock it off!" Alexis yelled.

The two sparring opponents were oblivious to her. Xira moved in just as the Spartan turned his back to the other SpecOps commander. The Sangheili barreled into the Spartan. It stumbled forward, dazed but quickly turned to face its new attacker. The Major finally got a good look at its face. A male, blonde hair shaved to a stubble, a light layer of fuzz covered the lower half of his face, a scar ran from temple to chin on one side, and his blue eyes were full of anger and hatred.

Just as the two Sangheili were able to turn the Spartan around, they pinned his arms behind him, the Major placed an energy dagger about an inch away from his neck. "You think we can save the fight for later?" she asked.

The human glared at her. "Go ahead. Kill me. It's the least you could do," he spat at her, sarcasm colored his voice. The Major fixed him with one green eye. "I won't," she started, hardly believing her own words (here was one of the Covenant's greatest enemies at her mercy and she was letting him off), "But the Brutes will. And it'll be worse than what I had in mind for you." She glared at the human.

"What? You covie bastards finally getting soft?" The Spartan laughed.

The Major twitched the dagger ever so slightly but the human saw the subtle shift in her grip.

"You think you have the right to play god just because you wield a dagger over my neck? I've had plenty of experience with that notion." The Spartan tested the other Sangheilis' grip on him; they weren't letting up. A small strand of dark brown escaped from the Major's helmet and drifted off to the side of her face. The Spartan narrowed his eyes at her and raised an eyebrow.

"You're a chick?" he asked.

"If you're asking me if I'm female, then yes, I am. Do not compare me to fowl."

He chuckled once more. "Jeez, can't you guys take a joke?" Varu and Kotan reluctantly released their captive Spartan. He stood up, glared at the two Sangheili behind him, and walked back into his cell. He came back out with his helmet on and a rectangular device in his hand.

Hup walked over to the Spartan and was given the device which was promptly set onto the Spartan's back. Suddenly, an yellow-orange field burst out around him and hummed slightly.

"Damned bastards took it off as soon as they figured out what it did," he muttered to the other two humans. "Is there any way off this rock?" asked Hup. "One," the Spartan replied.

But before he could continue, shouts sounded off down the hallway. The group turned around in time to see one of the human civilians take a needle through the head. He collapsed immediately. Without thinking, Varu herded the other humans in front of him and they all began to run down the hall to the outside of the complex. There was a reinforced door up ahead. The group ran through it but the Spartan stayed behind to lock out their pursuers to buy them time.

He keyed in the pass code and the door slammed shut in the Brutes' faces. They quickly made it outside and found a trio of Phantoms stationed there. A quick check confirmed that they were in working condition. The complex was on full alert; time was running out. "You're sure they're working?" Kotan called out to Isna.

"I've already triple checked the systems on all three ships. They're fine," Isna replied.

With that, Varu and Xira turned to face the humans. The Spartan stood in the middle next to Hup and Alexis. "I take it we can shelve this fight for later?" Varu casually asked the humans.

The Spartan smirked, knowing it was more directed at him than anyone else. He nodded his head to the side once before replying. "Heh, you bet, hinge-head." The Spartan turned around and walked back to the Phantom.

Hup regarded the two Sangheili carefully, most likely wondering why the aliens were letting him off the hook. He turned for the Phantom but not before noticing the look that passed between Alexis and Xira. He narrowed his eyes at the alien who just happened to meet his gaze. The two didn't blink for a long moment before Alexis tapped Hup's

shoulder. The ODST reluctantly turned his gaze back to the dropship. The Spartan poked his head out the side door.

"Hey," he called out to the Sangheili, "What're you planning on doing to the third ship?"

"Destroy it, obviously," replied Kotan.

"Let me handle that," the Spartan replied. He walked over to the other Phantom and placed a cylindrical device on its surface. He turned his attention back the Sangheili. "Better get going. Two minute timer on it," he said simply before stepping onto the Phantom. Isna was at the controls when the Major stepped aboard.

Kotan was rubbing his wrist. "Next time," he muttered, "Next time, that human is mine," he growled as Isna activated the Phantom. The ship rose but not before a few Brutes made it outside. They began to fire at the ship. Isna tapped at the controls and the Phantom rose higher into the sky. There was a muffled explosion below as the grounded Phantom detonated.

With no further interruptions, Isna engaged the shi

End  
file.